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SOURCE Stratitotika Nea.

GENERAL CONDITIONS AT DANUBE-BLACK SEA CANAL PROJECT

[Comment: The following article by I. Ratiu [approximate transliteration from Greek], a Rumanian journalist, originally appeared in La Nation Romaine, a Paris newspaper published by the Rumanian People's Republic. The article was reprinted in Stratitotika Nea, an Athens weekly newspaper. The information given in this article was reported by two Rumanian refugees to the West, who had held significant positions at the Danube-Black Sea Canal Project.]

The plans for the Danube-Black Sea Canal were worked out originally in detail by the Council of Mutual Economic Aid of the Soviet Union. The canal is designed to make possible the entrance of 15,000-ton ships into the heart of the Balkans. As indicated in the canal plan published by the Rumanian Government on 29 May 1949, the canal is to be 100 kilometers long and will join the Danube with the Black Sea between the river harbor of Cernavoda and the new harbor of Midia which is to be constructed on the Black Sea coast. At present, the complicated and marshy Sulina waterway is being used between Cernavoda and the Constanta port on the Black Sea. Consequently, the new canal will shorten this distance by 300 kilometers.

The Council of Mutual Economic Aid depended on the technical and financial aid of the Soviet Union for the accomplishment of its plans; however, the Soviet promise was not kept. Nothing can be accomplished at the canal without the intervention of the party committee which is controlled by Reznichenko, a Soviet agent whose immediate subordinates are, for the most part, Soviet citizens. Administratively, however, the Autonomous Canal Organization is subject to the Rumanian Government.

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A large part of the machinery and tools used at the canal are sent from countries beyond the Rumanian frontier, judging from their quality. Consequently, there are 20,000 vehicles of either the Soviet type ZIS or the Czechoslovakian PRAGUE or the Hungarian CSEPEL. About 3,000 Soviet K.D. tractors were removed from use because of their inferior quality.

Cement, sulfuric acid, iron wires, nails, necessary tools, and other materials are being manufactured at the canal. Furthermore, barracks for the workers have been built and factories for canning tomatoes and fruits have been constructed. Relations between the canal authorities and the Rumanian population are limited. There are Rumanian workers at the canal and the Rumanian Government provides funds to cover any deficits. This shows very clearly that the construction of the Danube-Black Sea Canal is a Soviet plan designed to satisfy the general Soviet strategy.

The canal workers are divided into three categories: the freemen, the political exiles, and the cart-driver villagers. The freemen, most of them from among the Communist-Youth, are those who responded to the newspaper appeals that were made. Today, however, with the exception of a few higher employees, the freemen do compulsory work because none of them was given the right to choose his specialty. The free Communist workers are obliged to stay and work at the canal because of party discipline. The free non-Communist workers belong to the lowest class of citizens. The workers live in 40-man barracks and share their bunks with other workers.

There are 15 wage categories. The highest salary is 1,800 lei per month. The majority of the workers are supposed to be paid 600-700 lei per month, a sum which they receive only on paper since one third of their salary is kept for food, another cut is held for the party newspapers, Scanteia and Viata Sindicala, and various other "voluntary" contributions are kept for celebrations, meetings, and for party funds. In addition, a fine is collected when the work is not done properly and on time.

The 8 hours of daily work are extended by syndicalist meetings, "voluntary" lessons in the Russian language, technical finishing-school classes, work-coordination meetings, anniversary assemblies, etc. The party members are also obliged to attend classes of passive defense. Consequently, the workers are occupied 11-12 hours a day except on Sundays.

There are also about 30,000 prisoners at the canal who are divided into eight groups or colonies. These include criminal prisoners as well as political exiles. Each prisoner works for 8 hours, rests for 8 hours, and then works again for 8 hours. The prisoners live in oblong barracks, sleep on straw, and do not get enough food. The death rate among them is high. Criminal prisoners work together with political prisoners in four of these colonies. In one of these colonies for women near Sulina, women political prisoners live together with prostitutes. Finally, the villager cart-drivers are obliged to carry materials with their carts to those areas where there is no railroad line.

The following conclusions can be made from the conditions existing at the Danube-Black Sea Canal: (1) It is obvious that the Communist Party does not have among its cadres a sufficient number of able technicians. Non-Communist men are used in extremely responsible positions at the canal project. (2) There is no doubt that a lack of enthusiasm for the construction of the Canal prevails throughout Rumania, despite the continuous government propaganda.

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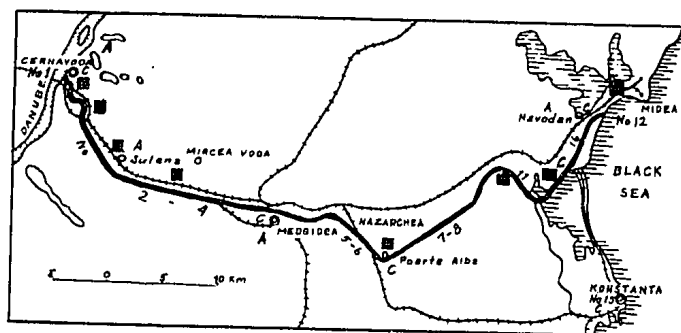
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The security system at the Danube-Black Sea Canal is extremely strict since the Rumanian political prisoners, who outnumber the free workers seven to one, put up a greater resistance than the Soviet political prisoners. The continuous Soviet Vigilance over the entire canal project points out very clearly the military purpose of the canal, which is the quick Soviet penetration into the heart of the Balkans in case of war.

[Appended map follows.]

[Map and description as published by Stratitotika Nes.]



The squares indicate the colonies of prisoner workers. The numbers correspond to the different workshops. The letter C indicates the centers of canteen trusts. The letter A shows the regions where agricultural enterprises have been established. The greater part of the canal distance, between Cernavoda and Medgidia, is marshy. The colonies of women exiles are located in the sector between Cernavoda and Sulina. The remaining canal distance, from Medgidia to the Black Sea, has been dug into rocky soil. The canal's factories, which can be changed into tank-repair plants, are located at medgidia.

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